



July 13, 2023

Good morning, Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and all the Members of Congress here today. I am honored to be here with you to testify in support of H.R. 1318.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the six living First Ladies, Mrs. Carter, Secretary Clinton, Mrs. Bush, Mrs. Obama, Mrs. Trump, and Dr. Biden, for serving together as the Honorary Chairs of the Women's Suffrage National Monument Foundation.

There are two simple yet history-defining questions at the heart of today's hearing: is there room for the great women of American history in the heart of the National Mall, in the area known as Reserve; and does the addition of a monument to the women's suffrage movement uphold and enhance the integrity of the National Mall? Our answer to both questions is, unequivocally, yes.

The National Mall, which is the most visited National Park in the United States with 36 million annual visitors, is our Nation's foremost commemorative space. Its significance—both symbolically in its embodiment of our country's ideals and physically as the land that holds our national memory—cannot be overstated.

But the story told on the National Mall is not yet complete. Walking the grounds of the Mall today, you will encounter war memorials and monuments honoring civil rights heroes and past presidents. You will stand in awe of the giants who have earned their place in our national story. But you won't see the great women of American history whose bravery shaped our democracy.

Of the 40 commemorative works in the Reserve, 22 (55%) are dedicated to singular men. 10 are dedicated to military veterans and war history, three to foreign relations, two to private organizations, one to America's postal history, one to America's canal history, and one to the history of horses on the National Mall. *Zero* of the 40 commemorative works in the Reserve are dedicated to American women's history. Amongst our most iconic monuments and memorials, American women's stories are missing (*see Appendix A*).

But is there space for a new memorial on the National Mall?

The Reserve measures 1,030 acres. Of those 1,030 acres, 699 acres are greenspace. To commemorate the role of 51% of the population in building, securing, and expanding our Nation's democracy, we are asking for one acre. One acre out of 699 (*see Appendix A*).

The National Park Service has testified today that although women are important, we are not important enough to hold space on the National Mall. They have told every woman and girl in the United States that although there are 699 acres of green space in the Reserve, by asking for one acre, we are simply asking for too much.

I could let that bother me. Or, I could remember the lessons learned from the suffragists and their fight for the 19th Amendment. History is made in these halls. And history is written by the people's branch.

Today is July 13, 2023. And while I am not usually a person who looks for signs, every once in a while, the universe knocks so loudly, you have to sit up and listen. Exactly 175 years ago on this date in 1848, five women—Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Martha Coffin Wright, Mary Ann McClintock, and Jane Hunt—gathered together on an unusually hot day for a quiet tea in Upstate New York. With the windows open and nearly a dozen children running around their skirts, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who was just 32 years old that summer, posed two questions to the women gathered around her that would change the course of American history: hadn't the Revolutionary War been fought just 70 years earlier to win the right to self-governance for *every* American? Shouldn't it be that in this new and great Nation, one truth should be self-evident, that all men *and women* are created equal?

The women's suffrage movement began 175 years ago today, around a table in Waterloo, when five young mothers decided that they would fight for the ideals of freedom, justice, and equality so central to the founding of our Republic. They did not know then that their fight would take 72 more years. They did not know then that not one of the women around the table that day would live to see the ratification of the 19th Amendment. But they prayed that their children would. And as every parent knows, that was enough hope to catalyze the longest and largest political movement in American history.

If the room feels different today, it's surely because our foremothers are here, standing tall beside us, with the certainty that because of this committee's leadership, every little girl who visits our Nation's Capital will soon see the heroes of American women's history where they have always belonged—in the monumental core of the National Mall.

And so, I return to those two simple yet history-defining questions at the heart of today's hearing. Is there room for the great women of American history in the Reserve? And does the addition of a monument to the women's suffrage movement uphold and even enhance the integrity of the National Mall? Again, our answer to both questions is, unequivocally, yes.

We thank you, sincerely, for your consideration of H.R. 1318.

*Submitted by: Anna Laymon, Executive Director of the Women's Suffrage National Monument Foundation*